# ANALYSIS

Edited by Bernard Mayo, with the advice
of A. J. Ayer, R. B. Braithwaite, Herbert
Dingle, A. E. Duncan-Jones, P. T. Geach,
C. A. Mace, A. M. MacIver, and H. H. Price

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### THREE SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE NET

# EXCLUDERS

## By Roland Hall

*The Notion Introduced.*

' INSTEAD of asking what " real " means we should try to find out what we mean by " a real so-and-so " ', might be regarded as a commonplace in recent philosophy. That is, ' real ', and a good many other philosophically troublesome adjectives, are attributive, and cannot be understood until it is known what they are being applied to in a given case.[1] Likewise the suggestion that many (or most) words are systematically ambiguous or multivocal is familiar enough,[2] and even older.

Acting on the first suggestion we find the use of ' real ' determined in each case not by a given set of qualities in that case, but by the use of some opposite, which is (in Prof. Austin's picturesque phrase) ' the word that wears the trousers '. Thus real experiences are not dreams (or nightmares), real tigers are not stuffed ones, real silk is not artificial (i.e. manufactured) silk, real estate is not movable property, a real example is not an invented one, and so on. Further, ' real ' is not only ambiguous between different types of cases, but often also within the class of comparison,[3] e.g. real tigers may in a particular instance be opposed not to stuffed ones but to cardboard tigers, or electric tigers, or two men in a tiger outfit, and there is no limit *a priori* to this ambiguity. It depends on the context alone which and how many of the possible alternatives are ruled out. This characteristic I call ' *open ambiguity* ' on the analogy of ' open *texture* '.[4]

Adjectives that have these features, i.e. (1) are attributive as opposed to predicative, (2) serve to rule out something without themselves adding anything, and (3) ambiguously rule out different things according to the context, I call ' *excluders* '. What has passed unnoticed about them is the extent to which they pervade the English language. It is mainly to this that I wish to draw attention.

### History

Mill is the philosopher who stands out as noting the existence of such words, which he classifies under ' negative names '.[5] He

[1] Geach, ' Good and Evil ', Analysis, Dec. 1956, on p. 33.
[2] Ryle, *CM*, p. 23 (' rising '); Waismann, ' Verifiability ', in *Logic and Language* I, pp. 134–46, applies it to ' real ' *inter alia*.
[3] For the term, see Hare, *The Language of Morals*, p. 96 and passim.
[4] Waismann, *l.c.*, pp. 120–1.                          [5] *System of Logic*, I. ii. 6.

points out that 'idle' and 'sober' are respectively equivalent to 'not working' and 'not drunk', or, when used disposition-ally, to 'not disposed to work' and 'not drunken'. These examples are only mildly ambiguous; but in the following section he gives a more telling instance quite by the way: to justify his use of 'non-relative' instead of the excluder 'abso-lute' ' which does too much hard duty in metaphysics', he says:

> It resembles the word *civil* in the language of juris-prudence, which stands for the opposite of criminal, the opposite of ecclesiastical, the opposite of military, the opposite of political—in short, the opposite of any positive word which wants a negative.

'Civil' is as good a standard excluder as one may hope to find.

However, other philosophers had noticed certain single words as having the features for which I call them 'excluders'. Descartes (*Principles*, II. 17) stressed feature (3) for the word 'empty', in order to say that though a vacuum in the philoso-phical sense was impossible, there could be a vacuum in the ordinary sense, i.e. a space containing no sensible matter. Locke (*Essay* II. 26. 4–5) discussed the attributiveness of various words, such as 'old' and 'big'. Hume (*Treatise* III. 1.2) points out that feature (3) *invalidates* systems using 'natural' or 'nature' as a foundation for ethics, and discusses the ambiguities involved. Mill takes this discussion further, in his *Essay on Nature*, pp. 59–60, where he considers 'the numerous acceptations [of 'natural'], in which it is employed as a distinctive term for certain parts of the constitution of humanity *as contrasted with* other parts' (my italics), and distinguishes five senses, giving examples. This detailed treatment is too long to quote, but worth reading.

'Real' deserves special mention, as it has received so many detailed but misguided treatments,[1] which it is not possible to go into here. Russell's efforts are sufficiently instructive to serve as typical. In discussing the word 'real', Russell falls into several traps. He sees the symptoms: 'The question what properties must belong to an object in order to make it real is one to which an adequate answer is seldom if ever forthcoming'.[2] But he still tries to find properties, not realising the word is negative and attributive in use, and suggests two criteria for

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[1] E.g. Moore, *Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, ch. xxi; Laird, in *Mind* 1942 (who sees to some extent its excluding features).
[2] *Mysticism and Logic* (Pelican ed.), p. 116.

being real: 'A thing is real if it persists at times when it is not perceived', and if ' it is correlated with other things in a way which experience has led us to expect'. This would have to be discussed on its merits as a proposal for a predicative use of ' real '; it doesn't aid understanding of the existing uses. Elsewhere[1] he puts forward a different theory, that ' real ' can be applied to propositions and descriptions, but not to proper names, and for this theory he gives the following argument: ' Words that go in pairs, such as ' real ' and ' unreal ', ' existent ' and ' non-existent ', ' valid ' and ' invalid ', etc., are all derived from the one fundamental pair, ' true ' and ' false '. Now ' true ' and ' false ' are applicable only—except in derivative significations—to *propositions*.' Objections to this are: (a) ' real ' does not go in a pair with ' unreal ', but corresponds to many words; (b) it is false that ' real ' and ' unreal ' are derived from ' true ' and ' false ' in any sense; (c) if the theory were correct, ' real ' could only be used predicatively, and as synonymous with ' exists ' (which Russell admits on the next page), e.g. 'Are tigers real? ' would be an alternative to ' Do tigers exist? ', both meaning ' Is there anything to which the description " tiger " correctly applies? ' But we couldn't *ask* our usual question, ' Is that a real tiger? ' *without* relying on the correctness of the description.

## Some Examples

I now mention some typical excluders:

' *Ordinary* ' is one which has given some trouble, as it remains undetermined in the expression ' ordinary language ', until it is clear whether what it excludes is the language of the educated, the expert, the symbolic logician, the philosopher, or several of these at once, or something else. E.g. Russell when polemizing[2] misunderstands the phrase as if it always excluded the language of the educated, but uses it himself in his early articles[3] and elsewhere[4] to exclude the language of mathematical logic. Again, whereas the average man has quite definite characteristics (I.Q. about 100, and so on) even when we don't know what they are, ' the ordinary man ' is a meaningless expression outside a particular *context*, and many contexts allow it to remain ambiguous enough to be popular among politicians. It leaves the

[1] *Loc. cit.*, p. 166.
[2] ' The Cult of Common Usage ', *BJPS*, Vol. III (1952–3), 303–7.
[3] In the reprints in *Logic and Knowledge*, e.g. on pp. 68 and 195.
[4] E.g. in *My Philosophical Development* (1959), on pp. 75, 93, 99; for a different contrast (with jargon) cf. p. 170. Note also ' ordinary written language ' in *PM* I(2nd ed.), p. 8.

impression that there is a first-order quality of ' ordinariness '. Here some people are *genuinely* misled by the grammatical forms of the language, because they feel that all adjectives are predicative, whereas no one thinks all nouns are substantial, e.g. that if he goes about in the nude then there is something that he goes about in.

'*Absolute* ': absolute music is not programme music, an absolute construction has no relation of syntax to the rest of the sentence, absolute rule is unrestricted by constitutional checks, a verb absolute is not dependent on a following accusative to complete its sense, absolute alcohol is not mixed with water or other fluid; and here the analogy between the different exclusions, viz. that they all exclude some relation to something else, is so simple that the temptation arises to find a subject of which ' absolute ' can be used predicatively, as unambiguously excluding *all* relations to anything else, and to call this ' the Absolute '. Dictionary treatment of this word is instructive: it is either defined by another excluder, such as ' complete ', ' perfect ', ' pure ', or by using overtly negative expressions, beginning ' unrestricted ' ' independent ', ' unqualified ', ' unconditional '.

'*Accidental* ': accidental sharps and flats are the signs not in the key signature, while accidental lights (in painting) are lighting effects not resulting from daylight. 'Accidental death ' would require a long definition, but clearly the definition must consist of ruling out other possibilities. (Compare the use of ' act of God ' as an excluder in law: its application is not decided by any theological investigation).

'*Barbarian* ' may mean non-Greek, non-Christian, or uncultured. There are other possible meanings, but they are all of this type. Plato (*Politicus* 262d) remarks on how people can be misled by this excluder: ' they separate the Hellenic race from all the rest as one, and to all the other races, which are countless in number and have no relation in blood or language to one another, they give the single name " barbarian "; then, because of this single name, they think it is a single race '.

'*Base* ' (adj.) may be used attributively of such various subjects as persons, sounds, tenure, language, birth, metals, and coins, and in all of these attributions it usually serves to rule out something, never to ascribe a quality open to immediate recognition. *Others* are: *plain, pure, normal, simple, standard, regular, perfect, ideal, abstract, bare, barren, empty*; (and possibly) *mental, actual*.

*Some further points and explanations*

1. *Difference from simple predicates*. It may not be clear why ' bare ' is an excluder and ' red ' not, since it might be maintained that ' red ' could be defined as ' not-green, not-blue, etc.' If someone knows the meaning of the word ' red ' he must understand me quite regardless of the context when I say ' That light is red '. But unless he knows from the context or is specially told by me, when I say ' That man's head is bare ', he won't understand me even though he knows the meaning of the word, because he won't know what I am intending to rule out. He won't know whether it is covering, camouflage, hair, protective apparatus, or just adornment, that the man lacks. So whereas ' red ' would be a genuine predicate even if it *could* be defined negatively, ' bare ' is an excluder because it *must* be defined negatively. Excluders must be defined by way of exhaustion, because they are used not to ascribe properties but to exclude them; and this exhaustion can never be completed, in the first place because of the systematic ambiguity of the words in their different applications, and secondly because the class of properties which they are used to exclude is an open class. Consequently, excluders are not amenable to definition in any strict sense: we can only point to where and how they are actually used. A definition would in effect leave us with a new word, that is to say we could certainly not do with the word as defined the most important things we did with the undefined word.

2. *Difference from ambiguous predicates*. It might be felt that the first difference was due just to the unambiguousness of ' red '. If I heard through a closed door the words ' It's certainly acute ', I could not know whether they came from a doctor diagnosing a disease, a geometer looking at an angle, or anyone testing a dog's sense of smell, or considering an answer to a problem, or a vast range of other possibilities. Similarly with ' That's the back ' (of what?). But systematic ambiguity, though necessary, is not sufficient to make a word an excluder: merely ambiguous words can be genuine predicates in that they may add something instead of merely ruling out, and I can understand them without further ado if I know what they are being applied to. Here again, ' acute ' *could* be defined as ' not-obtuse ', but it need not be defined negatively in this way; acuteness is an immediately recognisable characteristic of angles.

3. *Difference from simple negative predicates*. There are plenty of adjectives which do not ascribe qualities or relations, but are used to deny them. Since the positive or negative form of the

word can't be used as a criterion for this, as we are inclined to say with Mill e.g. that some ' un '-words express something positive whereas some positive-form words have negative meaning, we may be puzzled which to take as negative out of two incompatibles with positive forms, such as ' light ' and ' dark '.[1] Does ' light ' mean ' not-dark ', or ' dark ' mean ' not-light', or are both positive, leaving us to account for the synthetic truth that nothing can be light and dark all over then and there? This question need not be tackled here, for such pairs of terms are *ex hypothesi* not excluders, as they are in a one-one relation with other words, and excluders have a one-many relation to other words. Thus if (defying the dictionary) we regard ' light ' (not-heavy) and ' light ' (not-dark) as one word, we should be inclined to regard it as an excluder; it seems unnatural to suggest that ' heavy ' and ' dark ' *both* mean ' not-light ', though I find it hard to see reasons for this disinclination, apart from neatness. Similarly, it seems more natural to regard ' old ' as meaning ' not young or new or recent ' rather than to reverse the procedure. Though here again we might regard them both as positive, using Locke's explanation (*Essay* II. 26.4) that for every sort of thing the usual duration of which we know, we can say whether its present age is nearer to the beginning or the end of that duration, and so call it young or old respectively.

Another kind of negative predicate which is not an excluder is simple, but relational; thus ' anonymous ' does not rule out any qualities of a thing, but merely the relation of having a name.

Apart from really simple negative predicates, there are some negative predicates containing an implicit variable, which I do not count as excluders because their ambiguity is merely of the egocentric type: thus ' absent ' means ' not *here* (or wherever is in question)' ; an alien is a man not belonging to the country of *reference*; a man or thing is alone when not with something else of the *same* general type; and an allotheist *worships* gods who are not those of the country *he inhabits* .

4. *Being an excluder sometimes a matter of degree*. Although there are plenty of indubitable excluders, there might be difficult borderline cases. One word that has developed into an excluder is ' blank ', originally meaning just ' white ', but coming *via*

[1] Is the reason why Locke's examples of negative names seem so unquestionable, that they are far less easily ostensified than what they deny? (In *Essay* II. 8.5. *insipid, silence, nihil*, are said to be negative names signifying the absence of the positive ideas *taste, sound, being*.

'blank paper' to mean 'not written on or filled in', so that in time we get 'blank cheque', 'blank passport', 'blank verse', 'blank expression' (of face). So there must have been a time (probably end of 16th century) when it would have been hard to say whether 'blank' was an excluder or not, and it is not unreasonable to expect this difficulty with a few words at the present time.

5. *Exclusion not limited to adjectives.* Though the discussion has been restricted to adjectives, and the notion of an excluder defined as an adjective with certain properties in use, nouns and other parts of speech can be found following the same pattern. Examples would be: *chance, intuition, luck.*

6. *Whether excluders form a genuine class.* I might be accused of committing the fallacy pointed out by Plato (quoted above), viz. selecting words which have nothing in common, calling them by one name because of three features that they all lack (predicative meaning, ascriptive force, and univocality), and then because of this one name regarding them as forming a genuine class. But the selection of a class is only used here as a convenience for bringing out a certain pattern in language; it is not being inferred that excluders have anything but these negative defining properties in common. If the present article should appear barmecidal to some readers, they would be those who are free from the common and natural inclination to assimilate excluders to a different pattern, that of predicative, positive, univocal words.

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## THE 'MEANING' OF RUSSELL'S THEORY OF DESCRIPTIONS

### By ALAN R. WHITE

IT is sometimes, and I think justifiably, held that Russell confused the idea of *meaning* which is akin to use and the idea of *meaning* which is akin to reference, or perhaps denotation. We express the first idea when we say, e.g., that by ' analysis ' I *meant* ' resolution into simple parts ' and the second idea when we say, e.g., that by ' the biggest liar in town ' I *meant* the defendant.

An opportunity for giving a neat and precise proof of this confusion is provided by a passage in Russell's latest book, *My Philosophical Development*. On p. 85 occurs the following passage, in which I have for the sake of exposition inserted an (a) and a (b) before the main premisses.

" The central point of the theory of descriptions was that a phrase may contribute to the meaning of a sentence without having any meaning at all in isolation. Of this, in the case of descriptions, there is precise proof: (a) If 'the author of *Waverley*' meant anything other than ' Scott ', ' Scott is the author of *Waverley* ' would be false, which it is not. (b) If ' the author of *Waverley* ' meant ' Scott ', ' Scott is the author of *Waverley* ' would be a tautology, which it is not. Therefore, ' the author of *Waverley* ' means neither ' Scott ' nor anything else—i.e. ' the author of *Waverley* ' means nothing, Q.E.D."

Now (I): If ' meant ' is here being used in the sense of ' referred to ' (as Russell's general views might suggest), then premiss (a) is true, but premiss (b) is *false*. For the fact that one expression, e.g. ' the author of *Waverley* ', refers to the same person as does another expression, e.g. ' Scott ', goes no way to show that the sentence in which these two referring expressions are joined by an ' is ' of identity can only express a tautology. To suppose so is to make the mistaken assumption that if two expressions refer to the same thing, then the two expressions are synonymous and, therefore, that their conjunction by the word ' is ' results in a sentence expressing a tautology. It is obviously not a tautology to say that the man in the brown cap is the last to get on the bus, even though this statement would not be true unless the non-synonymous expressions ' the man in the brown cap ' and ' the last to get on the bus ' referred on this occasion to the same man.

But (II): If ' meant ' is here being used in the sense of ' use ' or ' sense ' (as Russell's use of inverted commas would suggest), then premiss (b) is now true for the reasons set out above, but premiss (a) is *false*. For the fact that one expression, e.g. ' the author of *Waverley* ' has a different sense or use from another expression, e.g. ' Scott ', does not show that the sentence in which these two referring expressions are joined by an ' is ' of identity must be being used to make a false statement. To suppose so is to make the mistaken assumption (which is the contrapositive of the mistaken assumption in paragraph (I)) that if two expressions are not synonymous, then they cannot refer to the same thing and, therefore, their conjunction by the word ' is ' results in a sentence expressing a false statement. It is obviously not necessarily false to say that the man in the brown cap is the last to get on the bus just because the expression ' the man in the brown cap ' is not synonymous with the expression ' the last to get on the bus '.

Since Russell's premisses cannot both be true unless the word ' meant ' is taken in a different sense in each, his conclusion that ' the author of *Waverley* ' means nothing does not follow. Indeed, anyone with a slight knowledge of English literature and of the English language knows that ' the author of *Waverley* ' does mean something, both in the sense that it refers to somebody, a well-known literary figure, and in the sense that it has a use or sense.

The reasons which have led philosophers to the above confusion are commonly known.[1] Having taken referring expressions, like demonstratives, proper names, some common nouns and some adjectives, as the paradigm case of meaning, they then failed to distinguish between the correct view that the meaning of such an expression is its use to refer and the incorrect views that its meaning is that to which it refers or the relation between it and that to which it refers.

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[1] Compare Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §§ 1-120; Ryle, ' Meaning and Necessity ', *Philosophy* XXIV (1949) pp. 69-76; my *G. E. Moore* pp. 40-50.

# ANTHONY QUINTON ON PUNISHMENT

## By Arnold S. Kaufman

THE main thesis of Anthony Quinton's widely read and highly regarded essay *On Punishment* is that, unknown to retributivists, retributive theories of punishment and utilitarian theories of punishment do not contradict each other because they answer different questions. The former answer the question " when logically *can* we punish? "; the latter, " when morally *may* we or *ought* we to punish?". This becomes clear when we consider the retributivists' essential principle: that guilt is a necessary condition of punishment. All they are saying is that " The infliction of suffering on a person is only properly described as punishment if that person is guilty " (p. 86, in *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, ed. P. Laslett). And this is not a moral, but a logical doctrine. For it merely shows that the term " punishment " is misused by a person if he, knowing or believing that someone was innocent of any wrongdoing, inflicts an injury on that person and calls it " punishment ".

In a now famous passage, F. H. Bradley, a retributivist, wrote:

> If there is any opinion to which the man of uncultivated morals is attached, it is the belief in the necessary connexion of punishment and guilt. Punishment is punishment, only where it is deserved. We pay the penalty, because we owe it, and for no other reason; and if punishment is inflicted for any other reason whatever than because it is merited by wrong, it is a gross immorality, a crying injustice, an abominable crime, and not what it pretends to be.
>
> (*Ethical Studies*, pp. 26-7; Oxford University Press).

Three things may immediately be said about this passage: (i) Bradley does not sound as if he is merely saying something about the logic of " punishment "; (ii) Bradley certainly is insisting that punishment, as ordinarily used, entails guilt; and (iii) it is clear from this and other things Bradley wrote that he was in fundamental *moral* agreement with the views the vulgar (as he referred to them) held on the issues of responsibility and punishment, views which he thought *accounted for* what they *meant* by the crucial terms. In fact, he believed that one of the metaphysician's important tasks was to validate the unreflective

views of the vulgar on these issues. What is not true is the claim that all, or the main thing, Bradley was saying in this and similar passages was that the term " punishment " is only *properly used* in application to persons believed to be innocent.

What is Bradley claiming if he is not simply elucidating the logic of the term " punishment "? I think the moral point of the passage quoted can be brought out by substituting the expression " infliction of an injury " for " punishment " in two places, and " injury " for " punishment " in another. The passage would then read:

> If there is any opinion to which the man of uncultivated morals is attached, it is the belief in the necessary connexion between *infliction of injuries* and guilt. *Infliction of injury* is punishment, only where it is deserved. We pay the penalty, because we owe it, and for no other reason; and if *injury* is inflicted for any other reason whatever than because it is merited by wrong, it is a gross immorality, a crying injustice, an abominable crime, and not what it pretends to be.

This passage cannot be regarded as an elucidation of " punishment ". And it conveys part of what Bradley is trying to maintain. Bradley is taking for granted what most civilized men take for granted; that for one human being to inflict injury on another is *prima facie* evil. He is at least saying that moral wrong is the necessary condition of any such infliction of injury. And this is a very fundamental *moral*, not a logical point. General acceptance of this can almost be said to mark the transition from barbarism to civilization. (Presumably, for Bradley, this applies only to relations within communities. The relations between individuals from different communities, as in war, would have to be treated somewhat differently). Any term which denotes all those inflictions of injury which could possibly be morally legitimate from this point of view, must, it is true, have *guilt* as one of its defining characteristics. It is along these lines that we can *justify* the *conceptual decision* philosophically. If there is in ordinary language a term which already serves our need, more or less, all the better. But that fact is quite irrelevant to the underlying moral and theoretical purposes.

Can the utilitarian accept the views ascribed to Bradley— views which, as they relate to legal institutions, Quinton describes as " platitudinous "? For utilitarianism theoretically permits infliction of suffering on innocents in circumstances which one can properly describe as " punishment for . . . . . "

when this is believed to be best on good grounds. The point of the special cases constructed by critics of utilitarianism like Bradley, Ross and Mabbott is precisely to bring out this implication—which, they assume, will be regarded as morally untenable by their readers. Although, as others have pointed out, utilitarianism is more defensible than some of its critics have supposed, it does not rule out the theoretical possibility of such cases and is thus *theoretically* inadequate for anyone who cannot condone such action. These theoretically possible cases are also practically possible. Anyone who appreciates what is involved should either reject utilitarianism in its extreme form or admit that we are bound to inflict suffering on innocent persons if such injury is best on the whole. (Whether or not any one has ever held the extreme utilitarian doctrine consistently is beside the point—for there have been theoretical defences of it.) Thus Quinton's " resolution of the antinomy " is unsound because it begs the *moral* issues involved.

Nor is this the only moral issue involved. Bradley is a retributivist precisely because he goes on to make a further *moral* claim. Not only is guilt a *necessary* condition of the infliction of injury, but Bradley tacitly implies that guilt is also a *sufficient* condition of infliction of punishment, where punishment is defined as infliction of injury on one who is guilty of some immoral action. All we need do is show that someone has done an evil thing for which he is responsible to justify punishing him for that deed. Indeed, we are *obliged* to punish him for his misdemeanour. This at least seems to be the point which is implicit in the quotation from Kant's works which Bradley cites approvingly:

> " Even if a civil society were to dissolve itself by the vote of all its members, nevertheless, before they go, the last murderer in prison must be excuted. And this, that every man may receive what is the due of his deeds, and the guilt of blood may not rest upon a people which has failed to exact the penalty. . . ." (Quoted in *Ethical Studies*, footnote, p. 28).

Even, that is to say, if the whole pragmatic point of the institution of punishment (and ascription of moral responsibility) were to be eliminated, the guilty must be punished before the final dissolution of the social order takes place. We not only have a right, but an obligation to punish persons who have done wrong; and for no other reason except that they are morally

responsible agents who have done wrong. " Guilt deserves punishment " (p. 29).

Now one may take issue with the metaphysical or the moral adequacy of this position. One may criticize Bradley for having put the position forward unclearly, or for having failed to consider certain related problems (*e.g.* is *anyone* entitled or obliged to punish a wrongdoer?).[1] But what seems to me to be trivial and beside the point is the claim that for the retributivist the term " punishment " is misused unless the person who is said to be punished is guilty of the misdeed (or thought to be guilty of the misdeed—though this *is* a point on which Bradley is unclear) for which he is penalized. And what seems to me to be flatly incorrect is the contention that the only or the main question which the retributivists were trying to answer is the question, " when logically *can* we punish? "

What Quinton, like so many linguistic philosophers, fails to see is that conceptual *decisions* about moral terms, whether or not they happen to coincide with ordinary use, ought to be and have traditionally been made within a framework of theoretical commitment.

And it does not matter whether the decisions at which philosophers have arrived in the course of their *theoretical* efforts happened to have originated by making analysis of ordinary use the first step, the last step, the middle step, or no step at all in the intellectual process leading to the decisions.

Let me add, lest there be some misunderstanding, that I do not endorse Bradley's theory of punishment. My ultimate commitment, like Quinton's, is utilitarian. But unlike Quinton (i) I see two important *moral* points and some merit in Bradley's retributivist position; and, (ii) I do not think it ought to be treated as a *ploy*—a manoeuvre in some linguistic game—which needs to be *outployed* by showing that it was, after all, *only* a move in the game.

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[1] On this point cf. J. D. Mabbott, "Freewill and Punishment ", *Contemporary British Philosophy*, p. 300.

# MR. STRAWSON AND SKEPTICISM

## *By* M. C. BRADLEY

MR. STRAWSON has recently proposed a complex argu-
ment aimed in part at showing that neither Skepticism nor
Behaviourism will do.[1] The weight of the argument, however,
is more against the former than the latter. As a first rough
summary, the argument against Skepticism runs thus: if we
ascribe to persons both corporeal characteristics (" M-predi-
cates ") and also states of consciousness (" P-predicates "), as
we in fact do, then there must be in principle some way of telling
whether a given individual does earn whatever P-predicate is in
question. The ways of telling must therefore be " in some sense
logically adequate kinds of criteria for the ascription of the
P-predicate " (p. 105). If this were not so then the ways of telling
would have to be thought of as *signs* of the presence of something
else, the state of consciousness; but this would mean that we
only ascribed P-predicates to others on the basis of the observed
correlation in ourselves between behaviour and experience of
certain sorts. But " there is no sense in the idea of ascribing
states of consciousness to oneself, or at all, unless the ascriber
already knows how to ascribe at least some states of conscious-
ness to others . . . unless he already knows how to do this, he
has no conception of *his own case*, or any *case*, i.e. any subject of
experiences " (p. 106). It is held that this conclusion follows
" from a consideration of the conditions necessary for any
ascription of states of consciousness to anything " (p. 106). It
is therefore forced on us by the actual conceptual scheme in
terms of which the skeptical problem is stated. Thus the state-
ment of the skeptical problem involves a " silent repudiation "
of one of the conditions required for making the statement.
It might be thought that there is room " to drive in a logical
wedge " (p. 108) between the experience of e.g. depression and
the behaviour of depression. " But the concept of depression
spans the place where one wants to drive it in " (p. 108). In
order for the concept of X's depression to exist, it must cover
*both* the felt *and* the observed. " X's depression *is* something,
one and the same thing, which is felt, but not observed, by X,
and observed, but not felt, by others than X " (p. 109).

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[1] In the chapter " Persons " in his book *Individuals*. An exposition of the same arguments
is to be found in his article " Persons " in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*,
Vol. II. The formulation I examine and quote from here will be that in *Individuals*.

Now a principle I would not want to dispute is this: that if someone cannot say what it would be for an experience not to be his, then there is absolutely no point in his saying that such and such an experience *is* his. The question I first want to try to answer is, Can we move from this principle alone to concluding that the criteria for ascribing P-predicates to others cannot be regarded as *signs* for the presence of something else? If this were the case one could surely regard Strawson's case against Skepticism as made.

It is not clear to me that the signs-view is ruled out by this principle. For suppose someone held the signs-view, and confronted with the principle was urged that the principle made the signs-view untenable. Could he not answer that he was giving sense to the notion of the experience of others, and hence to the notion of his own, and hence to the signs-view, by saying that what he meant by the experiences of another N were " those experiences which stand in the same unique causal relation to body N as *my* experiences stand in to body M [my body] "[1]? But, it would be retorted, this will not do, for " it requires me to have noted that *my* experiences stand in a special relation to body M, when it is just the right to speak of *my* experiences at all that is in question ".

Yet is this the end of the story? For clearly the right to speak of my and his *body* are not in question and can be regarded as granted. And someone might move from this to saying that *these* experiences (the experiences he knows about, or, as Strawson puts it, " all experience "—so far) I shall call ' mine ', hypothesizing that other bodies have qualitatively similar ones uniquely related to them as these are to mine. That is, someone *might* succeed in introducing the distinction between his own experience and that of others by reference to the existing distinction between his own body and that of others. Hence he succeeds in side-stepping the objection that the signs-view is incompatible with the principle, by showing that the my experience —your experience distinction is possible within the framework of the signs-view.[2]

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[1] p. 101. This is not the context in which Strawson uses these words. In the context he is putting them in the mouth of someone who is suggesting that there is " an indirect way of identifying subjects of experience, while preserving the Cartesian mode ". But I do not see any reason why this same answer should not be made by someone who, while defending the signs-view, would not accept the Cartesian form of Dualism (i.e. a Dualism of two substances). In the absence of further evidence, I shall assume that Strawson would admit this and also that he would use the same counter as he uses to the argument in its Cartesian context.

[2] Perhaps the answer to this would be that the notion of " experience " could itself

If, therefore, the signs-view can be made coherent, it is not to be ruled out on *a priori* grounds; thus the possibility of skepticism about Other Minds is reintroduced, since a consequence of the signs-views being disposed of was held to be that such skepticism is ruled out.

Up till now I have assumed that the principle which I said I agreed to, is the same as Strawson's principle, already quoted, " There is no sense in the idea of ascribing states of consciousness to oneself, or at all, unless the ascriber already knows how to ascribe at least some states of consciousness to others ' (p. 106). I thus construe " unless . . . already " as stating a proviso, and having the same force as " if . . . not "; construing it thus certainly seems to make the principle identical in force with the principle which I accept. On the other hand, if these words are construed as having a temporal force, then the principle can still be construed as equivalent to mine, but a muddled statement of it. For if temporal consequences are to be drawn from my principle, then if you can't self-ascribe before (temporal) you can other-ascribe, *equally* you can't other-ascribe before (temporal) you can self-ascribe. The temporal construction of " unless . . . already " thus merely yields a muddled version of what is yielded by construing these words in their purely logical, i.e. proviso-making sense. Strawson thus clearly intends them in their logical sense, in which case I am justified in assuming that my principle is a reformulation of his.

It must clarify the situation to examine the alternative to the signs-view, i.e. to examine the view Strawson holds to be forced on us by the very " structure of the language " in which we talk about experiences, our own and others'. This view, it will be recalled, is that the ways of telling (about others' experiences) are " in some sense logically adequate kinds of criteria for the ascription of the P-predicate " (p. 105). Unfortunately no formal definition is given of this sense, nor, so far as I can tell, does the sense clearly emerge from the discussion in which the term occurs. The meaning I assign it may therefore not be that intended. The signs-view as I state and defend it, is an artificial reconstruction of the way in which the my—others' experience distinction may be supposed to have become established in the language. (Its artificiality is evident from its attribution of elaborate " hypotheses " to language-learners, i.e. to children of tender years). If the logical-adequacy view is a

not be acquired, if the signs-view were correct. There is no mention of such a supporting argument, so I shall not try to answer it here, though I think it is answerable.

competitor, as Strawson represents it to be,[1] then it too must be a reconstruction of the way in which the distinction becomes established. If it is thought that these views sound unlike competing accounts of how, for each individual, a language habit does or could become established, it should be recalled that the appeal is always to the question, Are the concepts which we suppose X to have in now supposing him to do so and so, concepts which the premisses of the argument allow or deny to him? (It is this court of appeal that prevents these discussions from being, in Mr. Strawson's word, *a priori* genetic psychology.) If, however, it is felt preferable to call the competing views logical doctrines, or some such, and to say that they are merely *supported* by reconstructions, then I have no great objection. I think that in fact they oscillate during the course of the discussion between being more like one and then more like the other. Now I find it difficult to describe a sense for the logical-adequacy view, whichever way it is taken, which makes it incompatible with the signs-view. If for example we insist, as Strawson does, on the impossibility that individual consciousnesses should be basic particulars, in the sense he gives that term, then, as he argues, we cannot think of the notion of a person as one acquired by combining the notion of bodies of characteristic structure and behaviour, with the quite independent notion of consciousnesses of such and such content. But to infer thence the undoubted fact that the ascription of a P-predicate is sufficient (logically adequate) to permit the ascription of at least certain M-predicates, is by no means to infer that the ascription of M-predicates, in whatever number, is sufficient to permit the ascription of any P-predicates. That is, our signs-view theorist might be prepared to produce the hypothesis that there *could* be other consciousnesses L, M and N uniquely related to bodies LB, MB and NB as *this* consciousness is related to *his* body, in order to give point to speaking of *his* consciousness; *then* go on to declare that he did not in fact accept the hypothesis. Thus it seems to me that the signs-view is still possible even if we admit the logical non-primitiveness of the notion of an individual consciousness. Thus to make the latter admission in no way forces us into something incompatible

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[1] ". . . in the case of at least some P-predicates, the ways of telling must constitute in some sense logically adequate kinds of criteria for the ascription of the P-predicate. *For* " (my italics) " suppose in no case did these ways of telling constitute logically adequate kinds of criteria. Then we should have to think of the relation between the ways of telling and what the P-predicate ascribes, or a part of what it ascribes, always in the following way: we should have to think of the ways of telling as *signs* of the presence, in the individual concerned, of this different thing, viz. the state of consciousness " (p. 106).

with Skepticism. No doubt the adequacy we allow the behavioural criteria springs from an abiding fact about our nature, viz. our disposition to believe that it is for others like us as it is for us. But for the reasons I have given I see no reason to think that the *accepting* of this belief is a necessary condition for the existence of the psychological concepts we have. Hence I do not see how challenging the belief is " silently repudiating " one of the preconditions for formulating the challenge.

It might be objected that since it is being argued that the signs-view is *incoherent*, we cannot expect to find explained a view incompatible with it. This is acceptable, but the trouble is that it is hard even to find what the *substitute* offered is.

Suppose again we seriously do rule out the signs-view; what process are we to think of as that by which the notion, e.g. of depression, is learnt? Surely there is more to it than coming to assign behaviour patterns to oneself and others? Quite certainly, for someone who merely meant *that* by " depression " would clearly not know what the word meant. But how does Strawson propose we should think of the process? He has to have us fill in the experiential content of depression *somehow*, while at the same time he has to avoid the objections he has urged against the signs-view. Do we *just* come to assign both the private and the public components, to mean *both* by " depression ", by some happy chance of our nature? But this would be bad *a priori* genetic psychology. We must surely suppose that in learning to assign depression we are formulating, in the artificial sense I have explained, the hypothesis that it is for him as it is for me. If we do not, then what do we do?

My earlier suggestion was that the logical adequacy view was not incompatible with the signs-view. This last argument suggests that it will collapse into the signs-view.

Whatever the logical-adequacy view may be, there is surely one conclusion it, and any other non-behaviourist view, *cannot* warrant. That is that " X's depression *is* something, one and the same thing, which is felt, but not observed, by X, and observed, but not felt, by others than X " (p. 109). For if what is observed and what is experienced, are each one and the same thing as depression, then they are one and the same as each other. I cannot distinguish this from Behaviourism, a doctrine Strawson explicitly repudiates.

I think Behaviourism is false because the Skeptical question, as I have tried to argue, can always be asked. By this I do not mean to deny the familiar arguments to the effect that doubting

has an end, or to the effect that the Skeptical standards of knowledge and certainty are set too high ever to be satisfied. What I mean is that it always makes sense to ask whether someone *is* experiencing what all the behavioural (past, present, future, hypothetical) tests argue he is experiencing.

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# WORDS AND PROCESSES

### *By* LAWRENCE RESNICK

Q: EXPERIMENTAL psychologists (and many philosophers) think that recognition is a *process* of some sort. A little analysis will prove that they are mistaken.

P: I am prepared to listen to a little analysis, but I warn you that I count myself among those who think that recognition is a process. What else *could* it be?

Q: I prefer not to worry about the alternatives for the present. I hope you see that *duration* is an essential attribute of any process.

P: I do see that. Are you going to argue that recognition does not have duration?

Q: Exactly.

P: Well, in that case I can save you a lot of trouble. Only last night I attended a masquerade party and, if I may, I shall divide the other people who attended the party into three groups. Group one consists of those I recognized immediately, group two consists of those I recognized after varying degrees of due consideration, and group three is composed of those I failed to recognize. So you see, I can assure you from personal experience that recognition takes time, that is, has duration. Undoubtedly the source of your mistake is a "one-sided diet"—that is, you have been thinking only of ordinary cases of recognition, such as recognition of the familiar objects in your room. There the recognition seems immediate, but only because it takes so *little* time. But you need only think of those cases in which someone at first seems vaguely familiar—then suddenly you *know* that you've seen him before—his name, it's on the tip of your tongue.

Ah! It's Robinson, of course! There the recognition may take several seconds or longer.

Q: Before you go any further into the details of my alleged confusion let me say that I understand your argument, I anticipated it, and, if you'll allow me, I shall now proceed to destroy it.

P: My curiosity is aroused. Please proceed.

Q: The fact that I recognize someone only *after* watching him for some time does not tend in the least to show that recognition is durational. Don't you see that if something, A, is durational it must make sense to ask questions like " When did A begin? " and " For how long has A been going on? " and to make assertions like "A is nearly over " and "A has just begun "?

P: I agree that it makes sense to say these things of something durational.

Q: Well, can you ask, " When did the recognition begin? " or " Is the recognition nearly over? " Can you say, " I've been recognizing for at least three minutes and I think that I'm about half done? "

P: Those sentences *do* sound barbaric but I'm not sure that one *can't* use them. What do you mean by your question, " *Can* you say so-and-so? "

Q: Perhaps this will make it clear. Suppose you were teaching English to a foreigner and you asked him to describe some feature of the party you mentioned. And suppose he said, " P recognized some of the people very rapidly but others he recognized very slowly ". What would you say to him?

P: I think I see the *linguistic* point of your question. I would tell the student that it isn't correct *usage* to say, " He recognized them slowly ". One must say, " He was slow to recognize them ". The procedure one goes through *before* one recognizes is not, within the bounds of correct usage, describable as the procedure of *recognizing*. Therefore, for example, one may not say, " I was recognizing him, but now he has gone and I'll never finish ".

Q: Very good. You see, when *you* described the party you said, " . . . group two consists of those I recognized *after* varying degrees of due consideration ". You did not make the mistake of attributing duration to recognition. You may have gone through some process *before* you recognized someone, but the *process* was not *recognition*.

P: Your " analysis " does have philological merit. But you

keep skipping around from questions of proper usage to questions of philosophy and psychology. I rather enjoy playing language games and I'm convinced that they are useful for making nice linguistic distinctions. But I think that if our main concern is philosophy we would do well not to confuse facts about the *word* " recognition " with facts about the psychological phenomenon which that word designates. Recognition is not a linguistic phenomenon and the conclusion seems inescapable that linguistic investigations cannot reveal the nature of recognition. Therefore, if it is true, as it appears to be, that the rules of English usage do not permit the use of what I shall call *duration-words* with " recognition ", nothing follows about the *phenomenon* of recognition since the phenomenon is not identical with the word.

Q: What would you say if instead of claiming that recognition is non-durational, I claimed that the phenomenon of *desire* is exactly the same as the phenomenon of *belief*?

P: I would say that you had moved from a relatively widespread absurdity to one all your own.

Q: Then do me the favour of *proving* to me that this latter claim is absurd.

P: Quite easily done. Consider the proposition " P believes that the sequence 939937 occurs in the expansion of $\pi$ ". The set of circumstances under which this proposition is shown to be true shows nothing about the truth of the (supposed) proposition, " P *desires* that the sequence of 939937 occurs in the expansion of $\pi$ ". From the fact that P believes x, *that P desires x* does not follow, and indeed when the proposition " P believes x " is true, " P desires x " may not even be a sensible proposition. Since the set of circumstances which satisfies the criteria for " P believes x" does not satisfy the criteria for " P desires x ", belief cannot be the same as desire.

Q: Suppose I admit that you have reported accurately on the generally accepted criteria for belief and desire. The man in the street does not use " belief " and " desire " synonymously. Still, your report, accurate or not, proves nothing. Belief and desire are psychological phenomena and only a *psychological* investigation can settle the question of whether or not they are the same. At the present time the public does not think it legitimate to infer that P desires x, given that P believes x. But the admitted popularity of this position is not incompatible with the claim that belief and desire are actually the same. The way people talk and think about belief and desire is one thing and the actual

nature of these purely psychological phenomena is quite another thing. Therefore, your argument fails to prove that belief and desire are not the same.

P: Utter nonsense! Of course belief and desire are psychological phenomena. But you cannot run an investigation unless you know how to identify what you are investigating. And if you think that belief and desire are the same you are not *competent* to investigate belief and desire. When you say that desire is the same as belief you are either using " desire " and " belief " in their ordinary senses or you are not. If you are not, then until you explain how you are using them I have no way of understanding your claim. If you are using the words in accordance with ordinary usage you are uttering an absurdity of the same order as "A cow is a horse ". It is no more a logical possibility that belief should turn out to be the same as desire than it is a logical possibility that a vixen should turn out to be a male gorilla. After all, one can also utter the absurdity, " Vixen are not generally thought to be male gorillas, but this should not cause us to close our minds, for popular opinion cannot settle purely zoological questions ". But it is not a matter of *opinion* that vixen are not gorillas or that belief is not desire. These are matters of *logic*.

Q: Bravo! I admit that these are matters of logic. And I claim that the question of whether or not recognition is durational is a matter of logic in exactly the same sense. The definition of " belief " is not the same as the definition of " desire " and *therefore* " Belief is not the same as desire " is an analytically true statement. Similarly, since recognition is, by definition, non-durational and since processes are, by definition, durational, it follows that " Recognition is not a process " is an analytically true statement.

P: It is clear that the definitions of " belief " and " desire " are not the same, but it is not obvious that it is part of the definition of " recognition " that recognition is non-durational. Dictionaries do not list *non-durational* as one of the defining characteristics of recognition.

Q: Perhaps I am using " definition " too broadly. Nevertheless, the same thing that makes " Belief is not desire " analytically true makes " Recognition is not a process " analytically true.[1] Correct usage forbids the identification of belief with

[1] Cf. Max Black's " Necessary Statements and Rules ", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXVII, No. 3 (July 1958), pp. 313–341.

desire and also forbids the attribution of duration to recognition, as you have already admitted.

P: Suppose I admit for the sake of argument that in a wide sense of " definition " the statement " Recognition is not a process " is true by definition. But then the crucial question is, " Is this definition correct? " Surely it *might be* mistaken. Surely common sense or ordinary language is subject to error. All you have shown is that *according to ordinary language* recognition is not a process, but I should have thought that you would have to show further that ordinary language is infallible, or at least that it is correct in this case, in order to complete your argument.

Q: Your arguments are becoming wilder and wilder. First of all, please don't confuse common sense with correct usage. It is true, but irrelevant, that common sense beliefs may be mistaken. As to your question of whether the definition of " recognition " is correct—don't you see that to say that the definition is correct is to say that it accurately reflects accepted usage? And to ask whether what we *call* correct usage is really correct is to be involved in absurdity. It is, to use your own example, just like asking whether those creatures we conventionally call " vixen " may not really be male gorillas.

P: I do not at the moment have a reply to your argument, which admittedly has a certain force. Nevertheless, I am not fully convinced that recognition is not a process, partly because I still cannot see what else it could be, and partly because I am left with the feeling that somehow your analytic procedures are irrelevant.

Q: Thanking you for the slight compliment, I suspect that both aspects of your residual doubt can be traced to the confusion of the *philosophical* question, " What is the nature of recognition? " with the scientific question, " What is the *causal explanation* of our ability to recognize? " To the latter question my analytic procedures may be irrelevant, but let me remind you that whatever recognition *is*, it is not some (possible) brain process which is *correlated* with recognition.

## ADDENDUM

Although Q's analysis seems to me to be essentially correct, I hesitate to call " Recognition is not a process " a necessary statement, not because I think it might be *contingent*, but rather because I am not confident that someone who *denies* the statement is uttering nonsense. If someone says that recognition is a

process, the normal philosophical reaction is, " You either are using ' recognition ' in its ordinary sense or you are not. If you are, you are uttering nonsense, and if you are not, then whatever you are saying is irrelevant to the necessary statement, ' Recognition is a not process '." I am not sure that this choice between absurdity and irrelevancy always applies. Consider some science in which criterion changes are occurring all the time, e.g., medicine. Many diseases which were at one time defined by a certain set of *symptoms* are now defined by the presence of certain *micro-organisms*. Suppose that the *sentence* "Anyone who exhibits symptoms S has disease D " was at one time $(T_1)$ counted as expressing a necessary statement, but that now $(T_2)$ the criterion for D is the presence of microbe M, and that therefore the sentence " It is possible for someone to exhibit S but not have D " is counted as expressing a true proposition. At $T_1$ an analytic philosopher would have said of anyone uttering the latter sentence that he was either uttering nonsense or else he was talking about something which at $T_1$ was not normally meant by " D ". But suppose that the sentence was uttered by a medical researcher who was anticipating the discovery of the micro-organism M. Here I have a strong inclination to say both that he was not uttering nonsense and that he was not talking about something other than what was normally meant by " D ".

To return to recognition: It seems to me to be legitimate to suppose that a correlation may be found between some brain process and recognition and that this brain process may *come to be used* as the criterion of recognition. This supposition is not only legitimate, but it is a kind of supposition which plays an extremely important part in science. I think that, as it stands, my analytic dialogue fails to do justice to this kind of supposition. And I believe that this failing is typical of contemporary philosophical analysis.

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